

Jim Doyle
Governor

Roberta Gassman
Secretary



State of Wisconsin

Department of Workforce Development

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Governor Doyle Honors Ashley Furniture, Top Refugee Employer
Presentation to be made by DWD Secretary Roberta Gassman
Collaborative effort has placed nearly 100 in Ashley jobs since 2004

La Crosse – On behalf of Governor Jim Doyle, today Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Roberta Gassman honored Ashley Furniture of Arcadia as the top refugee employer in the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Area. In honoring Ashley, she also paid tribute to others involved in the remarkable collaborative effort to ensure the successful resettlement of refugees.

"When the State Department alerted Wisconsin two years ago that Wisconsin would be welcoming refugees from Southeast Asia, Governor Jim Doyle and all of us in his administration immediately went to work with our partners in communities across this state to build on the success of prior resettlement efforts," Secretary Gassman said. "Ashley Furniture has proven an excellent partner in this effort and is not only a maker of quality furniture, but also a builder of strong communities."

Secretary Gassman recognized Ashley Furniture in a September / Workforce Development Month event at the offices of the La Crosse Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association. HMAA Director Thai Vue and his staff have worked closely with Paul Holte, Human Resources Manager at Ashley's Whitehall plant. Since the 2004, Ashley has hired 93 refugees, including 65 Hmong.

"We've fostered a real good relationship with Hmong communities in La Crosse and Eau Claire," Holte said. "We are pleased to have such a reliable workforce, and we've been able to grow. We're in a rural location, so this arrangement has been a win-win situation for both groups." Holte said workers start at \$10.75 an hour, plus benefits, and after eight weeks, can earn higher wages on Ashley's piece rate pay scale.

"It's just a really wonderful company to work with," Yang said. "It's really a wonderful transition for the new refugees. All of the people who came to La Crosse got employed, not only at Ashley, but some other places here in town, too. A few refugees have already purchased their own homes and have their own vehicles. So it's really wonderful program."

Secretary Gassman also relayed Governor Doyle' appreciation to Catholic Charities, the La Crosse County Human Services and Health Departments, and Workforce Connections, Inc. for the continued success of the refugee resettlement:

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